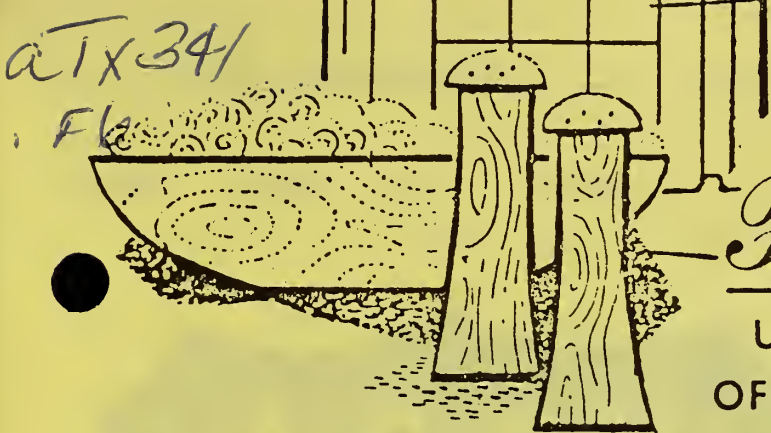


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# Food and Home Notes

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
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ALMOST —

## ALL ABOUT TURKEY

The outlook for turkey supplies for the rest of the year is -- in a word -- PLENTIFUL. New crop marketings and cold storage holdings are greater than a year ago and are expected to remain up throughout the rest of the year, according to the Agricultural Marketing Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture.



How much turkey do we eat a year? In 1975 each American ate over 8-1/2 pounds of turkey -- whole turkey and turkey products. Approximately half of the turkeys marketed were whole birds. The other half were cut-up or transformed into products totally changed from the whole form. Turkey products on the market include such items as turkey ham, turkey pastrami, turkey bologna, turkey hot dogs, turkey cutlets, turkey sausage, and turkey roasts.

What should a shopper look for when buying a turkey? Look for the USDA Grade A mark (on page 2) on the wrapper. It indicates that the bird is meaty, has a well developed layer of fat in the skin, and is practically free from pinfeathers; free from bruises, cuts, and tears on the breast and legs; and free from broken bones.



## ALMOST -- ALL ABOUT TURKEY

Most turkeys produced today are high quality and would be Grade A. This is the top grade and the only one usually found in food stores.

What are the other grades for turkey?

U.S. Grade B and C are the other USDA grades for turkey. These birds are as wholesome and nutritious as Grade A birds, but they may be poorly shaped, lack fleshing and fat cover, or have skin bruises or tears, broken bones, or missing parts. They generally are used in processed items so the appearance is quite different from a whole turkey, or they may be sold without the trademark in food stores.



How are turkeys graded? Turkeys are graded in the processing plant after they have been inspected for wholesomeness. Inspection is mandatory whereas grading is voluntary. Technically trained employees of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service evaluate the turkeys on the basis of nationally uniform grade standards. As a result, a USDA Grade A turkey in Pennsylvania will be of the same quality as a Grade A turkey in Oklahoma.

How can a shopper be sure of buying a tender turkey? The age of a turkey is the major factor affecting its tenderness. A young turkey will be more tender and milder flavored than a mature turkey. Most turkeys in the market are young and will be labeled young turkey (usually 5 to 7 months of age). There are also young turkeys labeled fryer-roaster turkey (usually under 16 weeks of age). Mature turkeys, those which have been held for egg production, will be labeled yearling turkey (under 15 months of age) or mature turkey or old turkey (usually over 15 months of age). (Note: The sex designation of hen and tom are optional on the label. The sex is generally related to the size rather than the tenderness of a turkey.)

(CON'T)

What is the best way to cook a turkey? Young tender turkeys are suitable for roasting, broiling, rotisserie cooking, barbecuing, and ovenbaking. Mature, less tender turkeys require long, slow cooking with water or steam to make them tender and develop their fullest flavor. They are preferred for simmering, steaming, braising, or pressure cooking.

How much turkey should a shopper buy? The amount depends mainly on the number and size of the servings needed, and whether or not leftovers are desired. The average serving is about 3 ounces of cooked meat (without bone). For a whole turkey or turkey parts which contain bone, allow one-half pound per serving. For a boneless turkey roast or other boneless product, allow about one-third pound per serving. Generally, fryer-roaster turkeys weigh 4 to 8 pounds, young hen turkeys 8 pounds and up, young tom turkeys 12 pounds and up.

How should frozen turkey be thawed? There are three suggested ways to thaw a turkey. (1) Leave turkey in its original wrap or lightly or lightly cover with wax paper if unwrapped. Place on a tray for easy handling and to catch any drippings. Thaw in the refrigerator until pliable. (2) Leave turkey in its original wrap or put in watertight plastic bag. Place in a pan of cold water. Thaw in water until pliable, changing water often. Poultry may be partially thawed in the refrigerator, then finished thawing in cold water. (3) Leave turkey in its original wrap or lightly cover with waxed paper if unwrapped. Place on a tray for easy handling and to catch any drippings. Put in a double-wall paper bag or wrap in several thicknesses of paper. Thaw at a room temperature of 70°F. or below until pliable.

How long will it take poultry to thaw? Many frozen turkeys have instructions and a timetable for thawing printed on the wrap. If not, when thawing in the refrigerator, allow 1 to 2 days for a 4 to 12 pound turkey, 2 to 3 days if 12 to 20 pounds, and 3 to 4 days if 20 to 24 pounds.



## TURKEY (CON'T)

Can a frozen turkey be roasted without thawing? A whole turkey frozen without the giblets and frozen turkey parts can be cooked without thawing with extra cooking time. Allow at least one and one-half times as long to cook as required for unfrozen or thawed poultry of the same weight and shape. Frozen commercially-stuffed turkey should never be thawed before cooking.

What needs to be done to a ready-to-cook turkey before it is oven-roasted. A frozen turkey is usually thawed first. Then check the neck cavity and body cavity to find and remove the neck and bag of giblets. Wash and clean the turkey as needed inside and out in cold water, allow to drain well, and pat dry. Rub the inside with salt and other seasonings as desired. If the turkey is to be stuffed, do it at this time. Fold the neck skin over to the back and fasten with a skewer. Turn wingtips back at the heavy wingbone to rest against the neck skin. Close body cavity with skewers. Tuck ends of legs under band of skin or the metal clip at the tail, or tie the legs together with string. Place turkey on a rack in an open roasting pan and it is ready to go into the oven.

What is the proper way to handle turkey at home? Turkey is perishable. Take it home as quickly as possible and put in the refrigerator or freezer immediately. Fresh, chilled turkey should be used within 1 to 2 days. Frozen turkey will maintain quality at 0°F. for up to 1 year if whole, 6 months if cut-up, and should be cooked promptly after thawing.

Remove neck and giblets from the turkey and wash...remove any excess fat from the gizzards. Cover the neck, gizzards, and heart with water and simmer 1½ hours until tender. Add liver (during last 15 to 30 minutes of cooking) and simmer until done. Broth may be used to make gravy and the cooked giblets chopped and added to it.

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